

My name is Derek Barkeim and I came to California from a small town in Wisconsin. My hands are cracked, my feet sore, my eyes tired and I feel great. It's the end of a grueling, 5 ½ month season doing trail work with my crew, Yosemite III!

Coming from the small town / high school I did, I have never been around, worked with, and most certainly lived, with a group of individuals this diverse. I'm here in the woods with people of all races and all educational levels. It's amazing how people can put aside their different backgrounds and ideas to combine efforts in search of a common goal: trail work and personal advancement.

The things gained from the California Conservation Corps' Backcountry program can take an individual's life path and turn it 180 degrees straight towards success. Personally, what I and everyone on our crew have gained are things like job skills, conservation skills, extreme physical fitness and most of all, how to work with and cooperate with anyone. Not only do I think that we've been improving our own wellbeing (mentally and physically), through hard work and discipline, but we've been doing an amazing service for the public and the environment. Many state and national parks wouldn't even be able to operate without the work it gets from the CCC crews.

The decision to come to the backcountry is one of the best decisions I've ever made and one I'll never regret it. The way to make decisions is by weighing the pros and cons. After seeing the programs ability to offer training and opportunities at a great job, personal improvement, inexpensive help to many beautiful parks and forests, and mostly a summer I'll never forget, I know the pros outweigh the cons for the CCC Backcountry Trails Program.

Derek Barkeim--- Yosemite II Crew, 2003